

## High School Students' Health in Tennessee

### Improvements in Health Risk Behaviors among Tennessee High School Students Surveyed in the YRBSS from 1991-1997<sup>14</sup>

#### **Seat Belt Use Increased**

- The proportion of high school students who rarely or never wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else declined steadily from 31% in 1993 to 28% in 1995 to 25% in 1997. The overall decline in failure to often wear seat belts was 19%. In 1997 males (29%) and ninth graders (30%) were most likely to report never or rarely wearing seat belts compared to their counterparts -- females (22%) and seniors (20%), for example.

#### **Weapon Carrying Decreased**

- The percentage of high school students carrying a weapon in the past 30 days decreased from 30% in 1991 to 24% in 1997, with a high of 32% in 1993. Male students and 9th graders were most likely to carry weapons as noted earlier.

#### **Physical Fighting Declined**

- Physical fights in the last 12 months were also less frequently reported by students -- 40% of students reported such fights in 1993 compared to 33% in 1997, a decline of about 18%. Again, male students were at higher risk for fights than female students (41% versus 26%, respectively), and 9th graders were much more likely to fight than upper class students.

#### **Consideration of Suicide Falls but Attempts Remained Stable**

- Serious consideration of suicide was lower among high school students surveyed in 1997 than in 1993 or 1991. A linear decline is evident in the percentage of students reportedly seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months, from 29% of students in 1991 to 22% in 1997. A slight decrease in the proportion of students making a suicide plan is observed from 1991 (19%) to 1997 (17%).
- The percentage of high school students actually attempting suicide has remained stable over time - around 9%-11%. Students reporting injury requiring medical care has also stabilized at 2%-4%.

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<sup>14</sup>For some comparisons, only 3 rather than 4 data points were available.